2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

wanted to, so that the people always had meat. He had good luck on the battlefield and could bring rains for the crops. 773

Then he was married. Two sisters were brought to him by their father and mother. (This was the custom in olden times. The parents of children of marriageable age would bring them to some eligible man.) 539

The boy's grandmother is still living. The people downstream from the Knife River used to follow the river up to her place when on the warpath and eat corn with her. She would tell them now many people they would kill.

She became tired of this because they came too often, so she moved down the river about four miles, then up into the hills to the west where she disappeared. Since then she has been one of the Holy Women connected with corn. She must come back to Short Missouri, as people fasting there during the summer dream of her. Grandson went back to the sky and became one of the large stars.

CORN PIPE CEREMONY

This ceremony became extinct after 1837 and is remembered only from tradition. The principal article in its bundle was a sacred wooden pipe. The pipe was kept by Blue Snake Woman when her husband and children died during the smallpox epidemic. She surrendered the bundle to a daughter, who sold the pipe to Black Bear, who died a few years ago. The full bundle ritual was not performed after the smallpox epidemic, since those holding rights or acquainted with the ceremony had died. 796 778

The pipe was noted for its supernatural powers in producing winds. It was brought out when the days were warm and sultry to drive away the mosquitoes, so that women would not suffer from their bites while in the gardens. People were not permitted to climb on the lodge in which it was kept. If it was dropped or touched, the wind would blow. 778 821

According to tradition, a woman went to the Missouri River for water when the river was at flood stage. Driftwood was floating down. When she dipped up the water, she saw the pipe and an ear of yellow flint corn together in the water. She took the pipe and corn home and gave them to her husband, who called all the holy men to tell them of her discovery. They were afraid of the pipe because a high wind came up when one dropped it and did not want to keep it. They put it back in the water, thinking it would float on wherever it was going to. The woman found the pipe and corn four times at four different places where they camped. The holy men concluded that, since they had tried to get rid of it but it kept following them, it should be kept. They thought the corn should be divided among the families. In that way yellow flint corn was introduced in the tribe. 778 773

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

Chapter IX

BIG BIRD CEREMONY

THE birds belonging to this ceremony were classed in four groups: (1) hawks, ravens, and crows; (2) young calumet eagles; (3) old calumet eagles; and (4) bald eagles. According to the myth, the thunderbird was considered a relative of these birds, while in other myths the thunderbird was referred to as any one of the four groups of birds listed above.

The various rites were frequently referred to as the Thunderbird ceremony. However, birds other than those included in these rites, as well as the Sun and Moon and the snakes, were believed to possess the supernatural power of producing thunder and lightning.

There were two principal bundles appertaining to the ceremony. The Black Medicine bundle owned by Red Buffalo Cow (Prairie Chicken clan) was traditionally founded by Black Medicine, while the Sweet Medicine bundle was believed to have been founded by Grows in Lee Places, his twin brother. The latter bundle was last owned by Sand (Speckled Eagle clan). These two bundles came from Nuptadi Village. A second Black Medicine bundle owned by Little Shield (Prairie Chicken clan) came from Fort Clark Village. The linked character of the Prairie Chicken and Speckled Eagle clans was expressed by the inheritance through the clan of two closely related bundles from two "brothers" of different clans.

The two bundles had a common mythological origin based on the exploits of two brothers. The myth was supplied by Ben Benson, while much of the data on rites relating to the bundle were secured from White Calf.

BIG BIRD CEREMONY MYTH RELATED BY BEN BENSON[1]

This account goes back to the time when the villages were near the mouth of Heart River. Chief Bird was the head man of one of the villages. His sons

1. For another relation of this myth by the same informant see Martha Warren Beckwith, *Mandan-Hidatsa Myths and Ceremonies* ("Memoirs of the American Folk-Lore Society," XXXII [1938]), pp. 53–62.

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

778 425 bundles containing articles representing sacred beings believed to be living in the world above, which would include People Above bundles, Star, and Holy Women bundles.

778 755 Bundle-owners doctored for insanity, feeble-mindedness, spasms and fits, premature births, and paralysis. Payment was made if the patient recovered, or, when the case was given up as hopeless, the relatives requested that the doctor continue his efforts. Pine needles were burned as incense, and the Black Medicine root was chewed and blown over the victim. The songs were sung while using a large gourd rattle.

778 Calf Woman believed that the bundles were primarily war bundles because the Sun was a cannibal who brought war parties together and had some killed so he could eat them. Men having the Sun as their god believed that it would be the enemy who would be killed.

778 425 One could sell rights in the bundle four times but usually reserved singer rights and the rattle for the oldest daughter and her husband. Women buying with the husband held Holy Woman rights to Old Woman Above and were entitled to wear magpie feathers and a braid of sweet grass and to carry an ash digging stick when attending a medicine feast.

772 Calf Woman added this general information about the beliefs associated with the ritual of the ceremony:

The world is in three layers: above world; the land we live on; and the lower land. First Creator and Lone Man created the land we live on. These lands and the sky are held apart by four large posts, for the universe is a large earth lodge. The earth is floating on water which separates it from the lower land because water comes out of the ground. There are people living on these three lands.

821 Sun dies during an eclipse. When there is a total eclipse of Sun, those with People Above bundles, which always includes Sun, burn pine spills that come from the Rocky Mountains, while all the people cry. Even the dogs cry. If the people are on the march when Sun dies, they stop to cry until Sun comes back to life. Sometimes Sun is sick, and then only part of the sun is dark.

Comets and constellations are people who once lived on the earth as holy people. The people were getting careless and broke the rules and did not treat these holy people right, so they went back to the sky and are making their home there now. When one sees a star going across the sky, it is because it is changing places, traveling as an arrow.

838 I saw three men who dressed like women; one was a Mandan, a brother to Four Bears;[3] the other two were Hidatsa. If a man dreams of the Holy Women and later finds a rope or porcupine quills in the forest, that is a sign that these

3. Four Bears also had a son who dressed in women's clothing.

3:Will and Spinden E-5 (1905) 1906
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

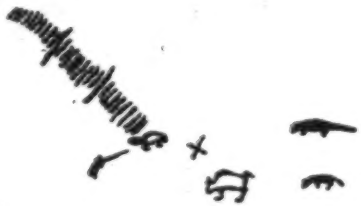
775 In this description of an after life, there was a marked mixture of ideas. The idea of multiple souls is Siouan, the rest is more or less common over most of the region.

776 As usual in the plains area every natural phenomenon and unaccountable event was mystery or medicine, and the medicine ●821 idea played the usual important part in all their religious customs. Thunder was ascribed to the familiar thunder-bird, the glitter of whose eyes dug a path through the clouds for the rain and caused the lightning.[1] Solitary claps of thunder were ascribed to a huge turtle which lived in the clouds. The rainbow was said to be a spirit which accompanies the sun and which shows itself when the sun retires for the night. The aurora borealis was said to be the fire kindled at an assembly of the great medicine men and warriors of the northern nations, over which they cooked their dead enemies in huge pots.[2] They had several beliefs about the stars—that of the Sioux, that each star is a man, and when a child is born the star comes down and when he dies it returns; also that a multitude of supernatural beings existed in the stars to which sacrifices and prayers [787] were offered. Dreams were of very great importance and governed nearly all their acts.

789 There were many small personal superstitions or mysteries. 843 One man told Maximilian that he could turn a snowball into a white stone, another claimed that his nose always bled if he picked up his pipe by the bowl. There were many signs of good and bad luck. A pregnant woman was considered to bring luck at the game of Skohpe. The medicine men told them that if a clay image of an enemy were made with a needle or quill in it for a heart, and were placed at the foot of some medicine structure, that enemy would die. A pregnant woman brings bad luck to her husband in hunting. Many of the Mandans believed that they had some animal, as a buffalo, turtle or frog in them; the women had a dance when they thought an ear of corn was in them, which the dance caused to come out.[3] There were a number of other superstitions of this sort, mostly common to all the plains tribes. One more notable might be mentioned, how- 372 ever, that of building the fire with two sticks crossed in the center,

[1] Ibid., p. 422. [2] Ibid., p. 423. [3] Ibid., p. 463.

532 212 instead of writing; for instance, the figures on their robes, the drawing of Mato-Topé (Plate XXII.), and the subjoined Indian letter from a Mandan to a fur trader:



212 437 The following is the explanation of the hieroglyphic figures contained in it:

The cross signifies, "I will barter, or trade." Three animals are drawn on the right hand of the cross: one is a buffalo; the two others, a weasel (*Mustela Canadensis*), and an otter. The writer offers, in exchange for the skins of these animals (probably meaning that of a white buffalo), the articles which he has drawn on the left side of the cross.

He has, in the first place, depicted a beaver very plainly, behind which there is a gun; to the left of the beaver are thirty strokes, each ten separated by a longer line; this means, I will give thirty beaver skins and a gun for the skins of the three animals on the right hand of the cross.

821 Many of them dispute, with great earnestness, on more elevated subjects; thus, they inquired our ideas of the various heavenly bodies, and of the origin of the universe, as they, themselves, declare their own silly traditions to be insufficient. Some, indeed, thought our ideas on these subjects much more silly than their own. They laughed outright, when we affirmed that the earth was round, and revolved about the sun. Others, however, would not reject our views, and were of opinion that, as the Whites could do so much which was incomprehensible to them, it was possible they might be right on this point also.

537 In all works that treat of these remarkable people, we find recorded very energetic and well-digested speeches of their chiefs. They frequently use very appropriate figures, and often said bitter truths to their white oppressors. Dr. Morse quotes some such phrases, used at the conclusion of treaties of peace, or declarations of war, which express much in a few words. Thus, in declarations of war: "The blood of our wives and children smokes on the ground! The bones of our warriors and old men are uncovered, and whiten the earth! The tomahawk is raised!" And on the conclusion of peace: "The bones of our warriors are buried! the tomahawk is buried! the blood of our women and children is covered! The path which leads to them must be kept clean; no weeds may grow there. The chain which binds us together must not become rusty." Or, on the contrary: "The chain begins to rust," &c. &c..

6: Wied-Neuwied T-5 (1832-1834) 1843 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

776 in the form of an aged man, and, at others, in that of a young man. The first man, Numank-
773 Machana, holds the second rank; he was created by the lord of life, but is likewise of a divine nature. The lord of life gave him great power, and they, therefore, worship and offer sacrifices
776 to him. He is nearly identical with Nanabush among the Chippeways, or the people of the
171 Algonquin language, who, according to the notion of those tribes, acts as mediator between the creator and the human race. Nanabush and the creator frequently had disputes, and the Mandans have similar legends. Omahank-Chika, the evil one of the earth, is a malignant spirit,
776 who has, likewise, much influence over men, but who is not as powerful as the lord of life and
773 the first man. The fourth being is Rohanka-Tsuihanka, who lives in the planet Venus, and it is he who protects mankind on the earth; for without his care the race would have been long since extinct. A fifth being, who, however, has no power, is something like the wandering Jew, ever in motion, and walking on the face of the earth in human form. They call him the lying prairie wolf. Besides these there is a sixth being, Ochkih-Hadda, whom it is difficult to class, and of whom they have a tradition, that whoever dreams of him is doomed soon to die. He appears to figure in their traditions as a kind of devil, is said to have once come to their villages, and taught them many things, but has not since appeared. They are afraid of him, offer sacrifices to him, and
776 have in their villages a hideous figure representing him. They worship the sun, because they
772 believe it to be the residence of the lord of life. All their medicines or sacrifices are offered chiefly to the sun, or rather to the lord of life, as inhabiting it. In the moon, say they, lives the old woman who never dies, and who wears a white band from the front to the back of the head; sacrifices and offerings are likewise made to her. They do not know who she is, but her power is great. She has six children, three sons and three daughters, who all live in certain stars. The eldest son is the day (the first day of the creation), the second is the sun, in which the lord of life has his abode. The third son is the night. The eldest daughter is the star that rises in the east, the morning star; and they call her, "the woman who wears a plume." The second daughter, called "the striped gourd," is a high star which revolves around the polar star; and, lastly, the third daughter is the evening star which is near to the setting sun.

539 The old woman in the moon desired to find a wife for her son, and brought a girl, whom she desired to wait outside the door. When the old woman sent out to fetch her, they found in her place a toad; indignant at the exchange, the toad was boiled in a vessel, that it might be destroyed. But this could not be done, nor could it be eaten, and it was, therefore, cursed, on
● [821] which it remained always visible as a spot in the moon. The narrator could not say whether the sun was large or small, but, at all events, it was glowing hot. The son married a woman whom they called "the narrow-leaved wormwood." They had a son, of great promise, who appeared destined to act an important part. He was very skilful in making arrows, and versed in all kinds of hunting and catching of animals. He shot birds for his mother, though she had

6: Wied-Neuwied T-5 (1832-1834) 1843 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

forbidden him to kill the prairie larks, yet he shot all his arrows at these birds, but he was unable to kill any. Upon this, one of the birds said to him, "Why will you kill me, since I am related to you?" He dug up in the moon the 'pomme blanche (*Psoralea esculenta*), for which his mother reproved him, because, through the hole which he had dug, they could see the Manitari villages in the earth beneath. And his mother said, "See, all those men are our relations; I did not intend to descend to the earth yet, but now we must go thither." The father once ordered the son to shoot a buffalo for him, and to bring him all the sinews of the animal; but the son twisted a rope with part of those sinews, in order thereby to let himself down to the earth. Accordingly he descended to the earth in the vicinity of the Little Missouri, but his rope reached only to the top of the trees. If he had had all the sinews of the buffalo, his rope would have reached the ground, but now remained suspended, and swung backwards and forwards. A large stone was thrown at him from the moon, which stone was in existence not very long since. The stone, however, could not kill him, he being medicine, that is, charmed.

The Mandans believe that the thunder is produced by the motion of the wings of a gigantic bird. When this bird flies softly, as is usually the case, he is not heard, but when he flaps his wings violently, he occasions a roaring noise. This huge bird is said to have only two toes on each foot, one behind and the other before. It lives in the mountains, where it builds an immense nest, as big as Fort Clarke. Its food consists of deer and other large animals, the horns of which are heaped up round the nest. The glance of its eyes produces lightning; it breaks through the clouds, the canopy of heaven, and makes a way for the rain. The isolated and peculiarly loud claps of thunder are produced by a gigantic tortoise, which lives in the clouds. When the lightning strikes, it is a sign of anger. They believe the stars to be deceased men. When a child is born, a star descends and appears on the earth in human form; after death it reascends and appears again as a star in the heavens.

The rainbow is a spirit accompanying the sun, and is especially visible at its setting. Many affirm that the northern lights are occasioned by a large assembly of the medicine men and distinguished warriors of several nations in the north, who boil their prisoners and slain enemies in immense cauldrons. The Chippeways are said to call this phenomenon "the dancing spirit," and the milky way, "the path of the ghosts."

Dipauch related a history of the creation and the origin of the Mandan tribe, in the following manner. Though this narrative is equally silly and tiresome, I subjoin it, as giving an idea of the intellectual condition of this people, and the nature of their conversations.

Before the existence of the earth, the lord of life created the first man, Numank-Machana, who moved on the waters, and met with a diver or duck, which was alternately diving and rising again. The man said to the bird, "You dive so well, now dive deep and bring up some earth."